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Won by Wireless

Thomas Littlefield Marble

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WON BY WIRELESS

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A Comedy in Three Acts

BY

THOMAS LITTLEFIELD MARBLE

Author of "THE RAIDERS," "THE HESSIAN,"
"A ROYAL RUNAWAY," etc.

PHILADELPHIA
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CHARACTERS

WILLIAM AINSWORTH . . . . . *a financial magnate.*
JACK SIMMS . . . . . *a wireless operator.*
ROBERT FAULKNER . *Captain of the "Mistress Mary."*
COUNT DI LUCCA . . . . . *an Italian nobleman.*
LADY CAROLINE RATHBONE . . *Ainsworth's daughter.*
GERALDINE AINSWORTH . . . . . *her sister.*
KITTY LEE . . . . . *Geraldine's maid.*

NOTICE TO PROFESSIONALS

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ARGUMENT

William Ainsworth, a financial magnate, finds his daughter Geraldine, known as "Jerry," is infatuated with John Simms, an impecunious professor of science, whom he has never seen. Ainsworth takes her to sea on his yacht, which, in order to keep in touch with the stock market, has a wireless telegraph outfit. Simms understands "wireless" and secures the position of operator on the yacht. Ainsworth tells Jerry how he intends to force down the stock of the Universal Electric Company, which he controls, and buy it in at a low figure. "But is that honorable, dad?" "Certainly; the strongest survives." Ainsworth wants Jerry to marry Count di Lucca, an Italian, also on the yacht. "Why, dad, he's a joke. I'm going to fight you with your own weapons."

Jerry and Simms by wireless instruct her brokers to buy up a controlling interest in Universal Electric. They do so. Ainsworth gets a message from his brokers. "Majority stock purchased by John Simms." "So, young lady, you've had a hand in this!" "Yes, dad, it's the same old story; the strongest survives." Ainsworth furious against Simms. "He's held me up for a million. I want to meet him face to face." "I am John Simms." "You may surrender to Jack, dad." Ainsworth refuses. Jerry and the Count. "I scorn your bargain." Ainsworth tries to bluff, but Simms and Jerry hold the highest cards. "What's your price for the stock?" "Three times what it cost and Jerry's hand in marriage." Ainsworth yields. "Jerry, marry this fellow soon. I need him in my business."

SYNOPSIS

ACT I. The cabin of William Ainsworth's yacht, the "Mistress Mary." Forenoon. THE DECLARATION.

ACT II. The same. Early morning three days later. THE ENGAGEMENT.

ACT III. The same. Forenoon of the next day. THE CAPITULATION.

TIME IN REPRESENTATION:—Two hours.

COSTUMES

AINSWORTH. Act I. Business suit. Acts II and III. Appropriate yachting costume.

SIMMS. Act I. Duck or khaki trousers, with belt; negligee shirt, with sleeves rolled to elbows. Act II. Same, with coat. Act III. Business or yachting suit.

ROBERT. Sea-captain's uniform.

COUNT DI LUCCA. Wears fashionable business suit on first entrance; afterward, an elaborate yachting costume.

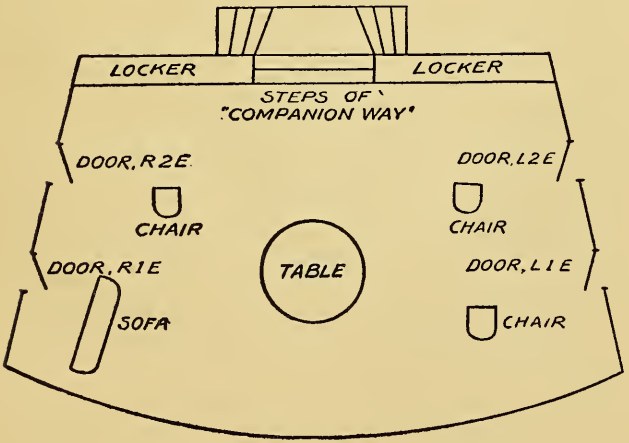
LADY CAROLINE and GERALDINE. Appropriate yachting gowns.

KITTY. Maid's costume.

PROPERTIES

Bouquet, also plates, fruit and other breakfast furnishings, for Kitty; slips of paper and telegrams for Simms.

SCENE PLOT



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ACT I

THE DECLARATION

SCENE.— *Cabin of* WILLIAM AINSWORTH'S *yacht, the "Mistress Mary." Companionway,* C., *back. This companionway consists of two or three steps extending through the centre entrance of the conventional interior scene, the upper step being broader and deeper than the others and forming a landing from which stairs lead to right and left, disappearing behind the scene. Entrances from the deck to the cabin are made by way of these stairs. The steps and landing should be carpeted if possible, and may be built with some degree of permanence, since the scene remains unchanged throughout the play. A large mirror or picture hangs back of landing. Doors opening into staterooms in right and left walls of scene, indicated in stage directions as* R. 1 E., R. 2 E., L. 1 E., *and* L. 2 E. *Large table near* C., *and sofa at* R. *Chairs, etc. If convenient, an electric chandelier, with lamps unlighted, should hang above centre-table. Long box-like "lockers" extend on either side of the companionway across the back of the scene. Each is about two feet high, covered with brilliantly colored cloth and piled high with sofa cushions. Pictures of a nautical character will doubtless be of service in creating the proper atmosphere, and if possible the staterooms should be properly numbered, and the name "Mistress Mary" painted in large letters over the companionway. Special scenery is not essential, and any good interior scene can be easily utilized for the setting.*

(*At rise of curtain,* KITTY LEE *enters down right stairway, laughing. She carries several large florist's boxes.*)

KITTY. "A spanking breeze?" Ha, ha, ha! Whom does it spank, Captain? (*Looks up stairway coquettishly.*) What! Aren't you coming? Afraid to leave your post, eh? Oh, don't be alarmed; the old ship won't run off the ocean. (*Tantalizingly.*) Come. I—I dare you! Oh!

(*She turns, with a little scream, and runs to centre-table, places boxes on same, and hides behind sofa.*)

(*Enter* ROBERT FAULKNER *by way of stairway,* R. *He pauses on landing.*)

ROBERT. A sailor never takes a dare, Miss Kitty. (*Comes forward and looks about the cabin.*) By Jove! I —I say! (*As though calling a kitten.*) Kitty, Kitty, Kitty —where are you?

KITTY (*from behind sofa, sings the last notes of the song in imitation of a bass voice*). "Rocked—in—the—cra-dle —of—the—d-e-e-e-p!"

ROBERT. Oh, I see. (*Strides to* R., *and grasps sofa.* KITTY *rises and moves to end of sofa, keeping the sofa between herself and* ROBERT.) Look out! I'm after you.

KITTY. No, no; keep a proper distance.

ROBERT. Ah, but you dared me! (*He steps behind sofa.* KITTY *passes in front of sofa, and runs to centre-table.* ROBERT *follows and pursues her around table. They finally pause, she on right, he on left of table.*) Come, pay the forfeit—just a bit of a kiss.

KITTY (*with mock indignation*). Sir, I'd have you distinctly understand I'm not that sort of girl. (*Demurely.*) And—er—besides, we might be seen.

ROBERT. Hardly; we're quite alone.

KITTY. Yes; but the others are coming.

ROBERT. Oh, no; they're all on deck.

KITTY (*nonchalantly*). Well, anyway, I've changed my mind. I must arrange the posies before Miss Jerry comes down. (*Opens one of the boxes, and takes out a large bouquet.*) See; aren't they pretty?

ROBERT. Very pretty. Miss Ainsworth must be a very popular young lady.

KITTY. Why, of course she is—stupid!

ROBERT. Tut, tut; I'm not so stupid as I look.

KITTY. Aren't you? You're lucky.

ROBERT (*as though exasperated*). Oh, you little bundle of impudence! I'll give you just three seconds to surrender. Listen. I'm going to count.

KITTY. Count! Ugh! Don't mention that word to me. It reminds me of Count di Lucca—the odious creature!

ROBERT. Why, what's amiss with the Count? He seemed quite devoted to Miss Ainsworth when I left them.

KITTY. That's just it—he is devoted to her, and she detests him. Oh, it's all Lady Caroline's doings! She married a nobleman herself, and nothing will do but Miss Jerry must follow suit. Why, she has her father fairly hypnotized.

ROBERT. And what does Miss Geraldine say about it?

KITTY. Oh, Miss Jerry's in love.

ROBERT. In love?

KITTY. Yes, with a young professor. (*Sits at right of table.*) She met him at the seashore this summer. He hasn't a penny in the world. My, but Lady Caroline was furious when she learned about it! The "Mistress Mary" came out of dock in record time, I tell you. And here we are bound for the Mediterranean and Count di Lucca's villa.

ROBERT. Ah! I see. Lady Caroline separates Miss Jerry from her impecunious lover, and throws her into Count di Lucca's society at one and the same time. Very clever arrangement, isn't it?

KITTY. Yes; but it wouldn't have happened if Miss Jerry's mother were living. I tell you she understood Miss Jerry, and would have sympathized with her. Why, not one of the family has ever set eyes on Jack Simms (that's the young professor's name), and they only know that he hasn't money or social position. But that's enough, and, presto!—Miss Geraldine is packed off to Europe.

ROBERT. But how did the family learn of Miss Jerry's—er—love affair? (*Sits at left of table.*)

KITTY. I shall never forget the morning it happened. We'd been out in the motor-car very early,—just Mr. Simms and Miss Jerry and—well, I guess I was a sort of chaperon. Mr. Simms was studying wireless telegraphy during the summer vacation; we'd left him at the experiment station and were returning, when just around a bend in the road we ran straight into Lady Caroline. She was riding, and her horse shied, so that Miss Jerry had to stop the machine. I think her ladyship had been suspicious for some time. At any

rate, she asked Miss Jerry at once what she'd been doing. Now Miss Jerry's a girl that just abominates falsehood, and quick as a flash came her answer: "I've been taking my fiancé to his work." "Work!" gasped Lady Caroline. "Heavens! A knight of the dinner-pail! I congratulate you." Nasty remark, wasn't it?

ROBERT. I agree with you. Did Miss Jerry resent it?

KITTY. Not so you'd notice it. She smiled very sweetly. "At least Mr. Simms isn't squandering dad's money on Parisian—frivolities," she answered. It was a dig at Lady Caroline, whose abominable little husband spends most of his time at Paris or Monte Carlo. Lady Caroline straightened herself in the saddle stiffly. "We'll discuss the matter later," she said, and rode on.

ROBERT. And did she discuss it later?

KITTY. She came to Miss Jerry's breakfast-room next morning. I was serving at the time and heard the conversation. (*Speaks with strong English accent.*) "I've been—aw—investigating this young pedagogue's record," she began, "and I find him altogether impossible. You've lived in this vul-gar American atmosphere too long, my de-ar. You're losing all sense of values. Count di Lucca is returning to Italy soon, and I have suggested to the pater that we—aw—convey him—aw—thither in the yacht. A sea voyage is a ripping tonic, my de-ar; it will restore your equilibrium. We start at once."

ROBERT. Miss Geraldine resisted, I suppose?

KITTY. Oh, no. Miss Jerry's as docile as a kitten—up to a certain point.

ROBERT (*interrogatively*). But when that point is reached?

KITTY (*emphatically*). You better believe the fur flies! Why, I'd no idea she'd be sweet-tempered so long, and I don't like it a bit. Something's going on that her father and Lady Caroline don't know about, but what it is I can't imagine.

ROBERT. Has she seen Mr. Simms since——

KITTY. Yes; he called yesterday. I think he intended to walk right up to "dad" and ask for his daughter's hand like a little man. But no one but Miss Jerry was at home. When I took in the tea things Miss Jerry was talking about the wireless, and stocks, and the Universal Electric Company, and about wanting to control something or other if she were only sure that her father considered it valuable.

When Mr. Simms left he said, "Good-bye"; but Miss Jerry answered: "No; just 'au revoir.' I'll see you at the wharf, remember."

ROBERT. And was he at the wharf this morning?

KITTY. Yes; he stood near a pile of boxes and barrels, and didn't look a bit down-hearted.

ROBERT. Did he speak to Mr. Ainsworth or Lady Caroline?

KITTY. No; they didn't see him. They've never seen him, you know. Lady Caroline was in her stateroom, and Mr. Ainsworth didn't come on board till the last minute. By that time Mr. Simms had gone. At least he wasn't in sight when I looked for him.

ROBERT. I presume Miss Jerry bade him an affectionate adieu.

KITTY. No; that's what puzzles me. She glanced in his direction only once. It was while you were having all that fuss with the wireless man.

ROBERT. Wireless man? (*Rises.*) By Jove! Talk about trouble! It's hard enough to man a yacht on a minute's notice without setting up a stock-exchange at the same time.

KITTY (*rising*). Stock-exchange?

ROBERT. Certainly. That's what Mr. Ainsworth wants of the wireless. These financial magnates can't rest till they know what the ticker's saying.

KITTY. I suppose so. But tell me, did the operator stay? Miss Jerry sent me below just as you were getting real angry with him. When I came back no one was in sight, not even Mr. Simms.

ROBERT. Oh, I let the fellow off. He furnished a substitute. The chap had been waiting on the wharf all the while. His luggage was there, and it looked as though he expected my approval. In fact —— (*He stops suddenly, and his expression is one of mingled astonishment and amusement.*) Great Scott! I'll wager a four-master that ——

AINSWORTH (*outside*). Stuff! Why should I bother myself with your musty old lingo?

(AINSWORTH *enters, stairway* R., *while speaking, followed by* LADY CAROLINE RATHBONE *and* COUNT DI LUCCA. KITTY *and* ROBERT *withdraw to back of stage.*)

COUNT. My dear sir, Italian is da greates' language in da world. To speak it is to make-a da music.

AINSWORTH. Maybe it is; but I never had much ambition to be a songster.

COUNT. It is derive' from da speech of da grand old Roman.

AINSWORTH. Is that so? Well, give me a tongue that's up to date. Now Esperanto's the very latest brand; simple as A B C, and can be learned in a week. It's no relic of the Roman Empire, but a twentieth century product, fit to take its place alongside of the automobile, the wireless and the air-ship. Who wants to fuss with Dago?

LADY CAROLINE (*affecting an English accent*). My de-ar father, argument is so beastly vul-gar, y'know!

AINSWORTH. I'm not arguing. I'm just stating a simple fact. Esperanto's the coming language. Why, inventions like the wireless are bringing all parts of the world so close together that we've got to have a common speech. It's a wonderful age, I tell you. Think of it! Here we are on the broad Atlantic, miles from any other human beings, and yet to-morrow morning I shall tell my brokers back there in New York what to sell and what to buy.

COUNT. So you have install dis great invention on da yacht?

AINSWORTH (*emphatically*). You bet I have!

LADY CAROLINE. I'm sorry, father. Jerry's young pedagogue's a bit keen on that sort of thing. He might take it into his head to send her a message, y'know.

AINSWORTH (*reflectively*). H'm! I hadn't thought of that. (*Abruptly.*) Where is Jerry?

LADY CAROLINE. On deck, I think.

COUNT. Yes, she is on da deck. I have speaka to her. I say: "What you looka at?" She answer: "I watcha littla old New York fade away." She speaka da word justa like dat. "It does notta fade away vera fast," I say. "No," she reply, "it is like-a some people I know—vera hard to shake!" I do not understanda what she mean, but I t'inka she have insult me. I make-a da grand bow (*bows low*) justa like dat, and take-a my leave—so.

(*Struts a few steps haughtily.*)

LADY CAROLINE. My de-ar Count, don't let it annoy you. Jerry always had a beastly tongue.

AINSWORTH (*laughingly*). Takes after her father, you know. We're altogether too American to suit you foreign chaps.

COUNT. Oh, Miss Geraldine suita me vera good. But I beginna to fear I do not (how do you say it in America?) filla da bill with her.

AINSWORTH. Keep up your courage, Count. We Americans like a man who knows what he wants, and never lets go till he gets it.

COUNT. Is it so? Then I will be like-a da Garibaldi. I will persist!

LADY CAROLINE (*with approval*). Bravo!

COUNT. I will now make-a da grand toilet. I will then be in-vin-ci-ble!

AINSWORTH. Nonsense, Count! Battles aren't won with uniforms.

LADY CAROLINE. Hush, father! it's the European way.

COUNT. And a magnificent way it is! (*To* KITTY.) Where is my stateroom, please?

KITTY (*indicating door*, R. 2 E.). This is it, sir.

COUNT (*bowing to* LADY CAROLINE). Excuse me, Lady Caroline.

LADY CAROLINE. Certainly. I fancy I need a little primping myself. (*Exit* COUNT, R. 2 E.) Kitty, will you help me?

KITTY. Yes, your ladyship.

(*Exit* LADY CAROLINE, L. 2 E., *followed by* KITTY.)

AINSWORTH. Well, Captain, how's the wireless working?

ROBERT. I've been waiting for an opportunity to mention the matter, sir.

AINSWORTH. Eh? What? Nothing amiss, is there?

ROBERT. We had a little trouble with Bolton, the operator. He left at the last moment; said it was on account of the illness of a relative.

AINSWORTH. H'm! Great-aunt or grandmother?

ROBERT (*smiling*). He didn't say, sir. A young man named Johnson took his place. He's rather a decent appearing chap; seems competent, and I guess things will go smoothly.

AINSWORTH. I hope so. I'm expecting a message from New York as soon as the market opens. Let me know the moment it comes.

ROBERT (*moving toward stairway*). Very well, sir.

AINSWORTH. By the way, tell my daughter Geraldine I'd like to see her.

ROBERT. Certainly, sir. (*The sound of some one whistling a spirited air is heard off* L. ROBERT *looks up stairway in that direction.*) Ah! she's coming now.

(*Enter* GERALDINE AINSWORTH, *stairway* L. *As soon as she enters,* ROBERT *leaves, also by stairway,* L.)

GERALDINE. Hello, dad!

AINSWORTH. Hello, Jerry! What's that adage about whistling girls and ——

GERALDINE (*shaking finger at him playfully*). Sh! Be nice.

AINSWORTH. All right. Where have you been hiding yourself?

GERALDINE. Oh, I stayed on deck for a while.

AINSWORTH. Tantalizing the Count?

GERALDINE (*nodding*). Um-h'm. Just now I've been interviewing the new wireless operator.

AINSWORTH (*slyly*). Interested in the profession, eh?

GERALDINE. A little; aren't you?

AINSWORTH. Oh, I find the fellows useful in my business.

GERALDINE (*feigning surprise*). Business on a pleasure trip?

AINSWORTH. To some extent—yes. I'm looking for a decision in the Electric case.

GERALDINE. Going to win, dad?

AINSWORTH. No; going to lose.

GERALDINE. I'm sorry.

AINSWORTH. You needn't be.

GERALDINE. Why?

AINSWORTH. Because I usually turn defeat into victory.

GERALDINE. Don't boast, dad.

AINSWORTH. I'm not boasting. It's a matter of playing the game, that's all.

GERALDINE. Oh, I wish I'd been a boy!

AINSWORTH. I wish you had, Jerry.

GERALDINE. We'd have played the game together; eh, dad?

AINSWORTH (*emphatically*). You bet!

GERALDINE. And if I were a boy you'd tell me all about the—er—deals you—er—swing, wouldn't you, dad?

AINSWORTH. I suppose so.

GERALDINE (*plaintively*). Well, I'm not a boy.

AINSWORTH. No?

GERALDINE. But I'm every bit as good. Don't you think so?

AINSWORTH. Y-e-s.

GERALDINE. Then why not tell me what the game is like?

AINSWORTH (*smiling*). I've not the slightest objection. Ask me any questions you choose.

GERALDINE. Well, how, for instance, do you know the Electric case will go against you?

AINSWORTH. It's very simple; we deserve it.

GERALDINE. Oh! Then people always get their deserts in the game you play?

AINSWORTH. Sometimes they can't help it. It's a wise man who knows when he's beaten.

GERALDINE. I see. Go on. (*Sits at left of table.*)

AINSWORTH. It's a long story.

GERALDINE. But I want to hear it.

AINSWORTH. All right. As you know, I've held a controlling interest in the Universal Electric Company for a good many years.

GERALDINE. Yes.

AINSWORTH. It's been a big thing and netted pretty handsome returns—so handsome, indeed, that certain disgruntled consumers long ago asked the court to regulate our scale of charges. Of course we employed every—er—known device to conceal the true condition of the company's affairs.

GERALDINE. Was that acting honorably, dad?

AINSWORTH. My dear Jerry, it's the same old struggle for existence, only we use our brains now instead of our muscles. Don't ever forget that you and I wouldn't be here to-day if the monkeys had observed a code of ethics.

(*Sits opposite her.*)

GERALDINE. Then it's part of the game for men to make monkeys of each other?

AINSWORTH. That's one way of expressing it. When the trial court cut down our rates, the public surely thought

it had made a monkey of your poor old dad, but after we'd taken an appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States, this same stupid old public didn't feel quite so sure about it. The price of the stock, which had declined sharply as a result of the court's decision, rallied gradually until to-day it is quoted at a very decent figure. Thanks to a—er—friendly press, the belief has become prevalent that the Supreme Court will reverse the lower court's decision. In the meantime, I have thought it advisable to sell as quietly as possible the major part of my stock.

GERALDINE. At the present—er—optimistic prices, I presume.

AINSWORTH. Naturally.

GERALDINE. I think I'm beginning to learn. Now if the Supreme Court should affirm the trial court's decision, as you anticipate, Universal Electric won't be quite so—salable?

AINSWORTH. You catch the idea exactly.

GERALDINE. But before that calamity occurs you will have unloaded your stock upon the public at a magnificent profit.

AINSWORTH. Jerry, you're a credit to the profession.

GERALDINE (*resolutely*). In other words, you steal the only available life-boat, and desert the sinking ship.

AINSWORTH. Fie, Jerry! You do your father a grave injustice. I've not the slightest intention of deserting the ship. It's altogether too stanch a craft. Now you must understand that Universal Electric is just as valuable intrinsically as it ever was. Indeed, we have long contemplated a reduction of our rates on the theory that the increase in patronage occasioned thereby will more than offset the loss per capita.

GERALDINE (*slyly*). Dictating an annual report, dad?

AINSWORTH. Not exactly.

GERALDINE. Excuse me. I didn't mean to interrupt.

AINSWORTH. No; of course you didn't. Well, on the day the court hands down its decision against us, I shall place on the market the few shares of Universal Electric I now hold. Prices will naturally decline, but a petition for rehearing will check the downward impulse momentarily, and give me time to sell out. Of course the court will eventually deny the petition, and Universal Electric will then go to smash. Thereupon, my brokers will be enabled

to buy back for me at a ridiculously low figure the shares I have previously sold. I shall still control the same powerful corporation, and be several dollars richer besides.

GERALDINE (*with animation*). Dad, you're a genius.

AINSWORTH (*grimly*). Thanks.

GERALDINE. But what if all these things shouldn't happen just as you predict?

AINSWORTH. Never fear. I haven't studied human nature for nothing.

GERALDINE. I know; but suppose when prices begin to drop, after the court's decision, some one should buy up all the available stock, and then refuse to sell—Universal Electric wouldn't go to smash then, would it?—when the court denies the petition for rehearing, I mean?

AINSWORTH. Don't worry about that, my dear. People aren't anxious to invest in sinking ships, you know. Besides, it would be a pretty expensive luxury. Why, Jerry, you're a very rich girl, and yet it would take every cent of the money your mother left you to purchase the majority stock of the Universal Electric Company.

GERALDINE. I understand all that; but suppose, just for the sake of argument, somebody did buy it; you'd be at the mercy of that person, wouldn't you, dad?

AINSWORTH. Well, yes, I suppose I would. Nobody knows just how valuable the stock is except myself. (*Reflectively.*) Yes—I guess I'd pay a pretty good price for it if I had to.

GERALDINE. And if the person who had this stock to sell had acquired some information about its real value which induced him to buy it—acquired the information by a sort of subterfuge, I mean,—he'd be acting—well, as honorably as you'd act under similar circumstances, wouldn't he?

AINSWORTH. Certainly. The strongest survives; that's the whole story.

GERALDINE. Thanks, dad. I understand now as I never did before that if one wants very much to win one can't be —scrupulous.

AINSWORTH. And are you any the happier for knowing it?

GERALDINE. Lots. (*Rises.*) You see, all the indications are pointing to a merry little war—you and Caroline, on the one side, and Jack and I, on the other. It's a tremendous advantage to know your opponent's style of play.

You've just told me that your code permits strategy and deceit—that that's the sort of battle you usually wage. Well, I'm extremely obliged for the information, and I don't mind telling you that I've understood your little game from the first, and I don't intend to submit any longer.

AINSWORTH. Why, Jerry, what are you talking about?

GERALDINE. I'm talking about your matrimonial scheme. Oh, don't you suppose I know what has developed this sudden mania for Italy? Caroline has bewitched you. She's made you think it's my duty to marry that insipid little Count. Why, he's a joke, dad! Marry him? Never!

AINSWORTH. H'm! I suppose you think you're going to take that penniless schoolmaster for better or—worse?

GERALDINE. I certainly do—with your approval, if possible; without it, if necessary. Oh, I'm not such an idiot as to elope while there's a more sensible way.

AINSWORTH (*rising*). Elope?

GERALDINE. I don't like to oppose you, dad; but it's quite as much for your sake as for mine.

AINSWORTH (*dryly*). Much obliged.

GERALDINE. You've listened to Caroline too much of late, and she's got a lot of false un-American notions. (*Half sadly, half humorously.*) Mother is—isn't here any longer to—to take you in hand. I—I guess it—it's up to me to look after you.

AINSWORTH (*half relenting*). Why, bless you, child!

GERALDINE (*pleadingly*). Dear old dad, I do so want your consent. It means such a lot to me! Oh, if you'd ever seen Jack you'd understand. Don't you wish your little girl to be happy, dear?

(AINSWORTH *regards her for a moment with open admiration, then speaks with grim humor.*)

AINSWORTH. My dear little girl, flattery is mighty effective ammunition—sometimes; but your "dear old dad" is pretty well intrenched against it.

GERALDINE. So it's war to the knife, eh?

AINSWORTH. I guess it is.

GERALDINE. Then look out, dad! I've observed the code of honor thus far, but from now on I'm going to fight you with your own weapons, and don't you forget for one minute that I'm William Ainsworth's daughter.

AINSWORTH. H'm! I'm not likely to.

(*Enter* ROBERT, *stairway*, L.)

ROBERT. A message from New York, sir!

AINSWORTH (*eagerly*). The decision of the court, I'll wager.

GERALDINE. Oh, isn't it exciting? Call everybody out, dad, and let's hear it.

AINSWORTH. What is the message, Captain?

ROBERT. Johnson is writing it down now. He'll be here directly.

GERALDINE. Oh, what fun! (*Runs to door*, L. 2 E., *and knocks.*) Caroline! Caroline! Come quickly; dad's got a message. (*Runs to door*, R. 2 E., *and knocks.*) Come, Count, don't you want to hear the news?

(*Enter* LADY CAROLINE, L. 2 E., *followed by* KITTY.)

LADY CAROLINE. My de-ar Jerry, curb your impetuosity; it's vul-gar.

(*Enter* COUNT, R. 2 E.)

COUNT. Oh, Miss Ainsworth, what's da troub'? Is da ship on fire? Do we sink? Oh, save me—save me!

GERALDINE (*sweetly*). Don't be nervous, Count.

AINSWORTH. What a fuss over nothing! It's only ——

(*Enter* JACK SIMMS, *stairway*, L. *He carries two slips of paper in his hand.*)

SIMMS. Two messages by wireless for Mr. William Ainsworth!

KITTY (*gasping at sight of* SIMMS). Why!

GERALDINE (*hiding* KITTY'S *confusion*). How perfectly wonderful!

AINSWORTH (*to* SIMMS). You're the new operator, I suppose?

SIMMS (*coming forward*). I am, sir.

AINSWORTH. What's your name?

SIMMS. Johnson, sir.

AINSWORTH. Well, Johnson, you may read the messages.

SIMMS. Pardon me. The first is a bit personal, sir.

AINSWORTH. Oh, I have no secrets from my daughters. Read it aloud.

SIMMS. Very well, sir. (*Reads from slip of paper.*) "To William Ainsworth, aboard yacht, 'Mistress Mary'—my dear sir."

AINSWORTH. Yes, yes; go on.

SIMMS (*reading with force and expression*). "I am an American. I will not give your daughter up if every crowned head in Europe tries to win her. Thanks to the wireless, there is no spot on land or sea where my words cannot reach her, and every day of her absence I shall send your daughter this message: 'Jerry, dear, I shall love you forever and ever!'" Signed, "John Simms."

AINSWORTH. Well, confound the fellow's impudence! I guess I'll read the other message myself. (*Takes the other slip of paper from* SIMMS.) Ah! This cipher looks like business. (*Takes small note-book from pocket, and compares it with message as if translating the cipher.*) Good! The court has dealt the blow, Jerry. Universal Electric is down and out.

GERALDINE. Not really, dad?

AINSWORTH. No; but the public will think it is, all right.

GERALDINE. Then the court has affirmed the decision?

AINSWORTH. Yes; and by this time, if my brokers have followed instructions, the trap is nicely set for the poor blind mice. It's the psychological moment, Jerry. Wish me success.

GERALDINE. Aren't wishes superfluous?

AINSWORTH. You think, then, that I'm bound to succeed?

GERALDINE. Do you ever fail?

AINSWORTH. You flatter me.

GERALDINE. At any rate, I'm sorry for the mice.

AINSWORTH. Oh, you're much too sentimental.

GERALDINE. Perhaps so. But I'll give you a toast just the same. It's this. (*With enthusiasm.*) Success to the brave, love to the fair, and good news by the wireless!

(SIMMS *stands just back of centre-table.* AINSWORTH *is at left of table, and* GERALDINE *at right.* COUNT *is near door,* R. 2 E., *and* LADY CAROLINE *and* KITTY *near door,* L. 2 E. ROBERT *stands at foot of stairway.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

THE ENGAGEMENT

SCENE.—*Same as Act I, except that the centre-table has been moved to* R. C., *back, and is covered with a white linen table-cloth, and partially set with breakfast dishes.*

(*Enter* SIMMS, *stairway*, L., *as the curtain rises. He carries four small slips of paper in his hand, walks to door*, L. 1 E., *and knocks softly.*)

SIMMS. Jerry! (*Pauses, then knocks again.*) I say—Jerry!

(*Enter* GERALDINE, L. 1 E.)

GERALDINE. Yes, yes—what is it?

SIMMS. The very best of news.

GERALDINE. You mean ——?

SIMMS. That your brokers have turned the trick very neatly. Listen. This message is addressed to you. (*Reads from one of the slips of paper.*) "Have purchased, as directed, a controlling interest in Universal Electric. Stock now stands in name of John Simms."

GERALDINE. Hurrah! Isn't it splendid? Does dad know?

SIMMS. Not yet; but he'll learn the worst at breakfast time. His brokers are in a panic. They've sent three messages already.

GERALDINE. Good! I scent the smoke of battle.

SIMMS. You see, they weren't prepared for such a crisis. Things happened at first much as your father anticipated.

GERALDINE. Oh, dad is sagacious all right.

SIMMS. The Supreme Court affirmed the lower court's decision.

GERALDINE. Yes—that was soon after we sailed.

SIMMS. A petition for rehearing was immediately filed.

GERALDINE (*interrupting*). And dad's brokers unloaded

the rest of his stock. That brings us up to last evening. Now tell me what weird, wireless voices called to dad in the night.

SIMMS (*laughing*). Oh, the vibrant ether was full of them, and it seemed to me they enjoyed our little game. First, a cheery little voice chirped through the darkness saying: "The petition for rehearing has been denied." That's message number one. Next, a rollicking bass recounted the story of how your father's brokers were unable to buy back a controlling interest in Universal Electric, and how they frantically demanded the reason only to learn that an unknown speculator had already purchased the majority stock. That's message number two. Lastly, a tiny, mirthful falsetto piped out the name of the daring young speculator who had brought consternation to your father's ranks. I laughed to hear it. That name was my own. That's message number three.

GERALDINE. Splendid, Jack, splendid! We're going to win, I know we are. Oh, I could just shout with joy.

SIMMS. Better not. You'll disturb the others.

GERALDINE. All right. I'll be prim and proper. When shall you tell dad the news?

SIMMS. I'll leave the messages on the breakfast table. Those are my instructions, you know.

GERALDINE. My, but dad's digestion will get a shock. Won't he be furious?

SIMMS. That's putting it mildly. This delicious little bunch of information ought to prove a bombshell.

GERALDINE. It surely ought; and when it explodes you'll follow up your victory with resolution, won't you, dear?

SIMMS. My victory? Why, you deserve all the credit, Jerry.

GERALDINE. Nonsense! I merely furnished the sinews of war. The key to the situation's in your hands; you must conduct negotiations with dad.

SIMMS. But what will he think of me?

GERALDINE. Don't ask yourself that question. Just remember that he'll never give his daughter to a man who lets her fight his battles for him.

SIMMS. Oh, I've no disposition to hide behind a woman.

GERALDINE. Of course you haven't, and I want dad to know it.

SIMMS. Consider my position, though. Your father will think I have betrayed his confidence.

GERALDINE. Ah, but you haven't. I'll explain it all to him at the proper time. You know very well that I had quite determined to buy this stock long before we sailed. My brokers were fully instructed, and had already converted my fortune into cash. I knew dad considered the stock very valuable, but I didn't fully understand his game.

SIMMS. Until he explained it to you himself the day we sailed.

GERALDINE. Yes. But even then it wasn't necessary to use the information he gave me, for my brokers had been told to purchase the stock whenever it could be bought at a reasonable price. I simply confirmed the order by wireless after my conversation with dad.

SIMMS. Yes, I know. But the stock now stands in my name, Jerry.

GERALDINE. Certainly. It would never do for you to enter the fray unarmed. As a poor wireless operator you're not quite formidable enough, but as the controller of the Universal Electric Company I rather guess you'll command respect even from dad. As for the stock, if I choose to loan it to you as a—er—further investment, that's my affair, isn't it?

SIMMS (*doubtfully*). Perhaps; but to tell the truth, I'm growing fond of your father. He has trusted me with the cipher code ——

GERALDINE. Well! suppose he has? You haven't taken advantage of it, have you?—except to read these messages which you couldn't help reading anyway.

SIMMS. No; but your father may think so.

GERALDINE. Then he'll admire your shrewdness. I know dad.

SIMMS. Well, but my conscience ——

GERALDINE. Don't let your conscience bother you. Believe me, dad's standard of commercial honor isn't lofty enough to make comparisons odious.

SIMMS (*reluctantly*). Well, then, I suppose I'll have to crush the "still, small voice," and play St. George to your father's dragon.

GERALDINE (*encouragingly*). That's right. And don't you yield an inch. Just make the dragon squirm; he'll respect you all the more for it.

SIMMS (*doubtfully*). I hope so.

GERALDINE (*decisively*). I know so. Now let's forget plots and counterplots for a while.

SIMMS (*with relief*). I'm only too glad to forget them.

GERALDINE. Let's go on deck where we can gaze out upon the ocean.

SIMMS. That suits me capitally.

GERALDINE (*sentimentally*). And let's think of the ships that passed us last night, and of the millions of stars that were floating up there in the sky. And you shall tell me—well, what will you tell me, dear?

SIMMS. I'll tell you how a tiny word is flashed out into that pathless void and received on the instant a thousand miles away.

GERALDINE (*enthusiastically*). And we'll think how very much we resemble those wireless messages—how we are flashed across the ocean of life, and cannot be kept apart by time or space or—or anything; and all because our love is——

ROBERT (*outside*). As wide and as deep as the sea, Kitty.

GERALDINE. Goodness gracious! Talk about telepathy! (*Enter* KITTY *and* ROBERT, *stairway* L. KITTY *carries a pile of plates which she places on table.*) Good-morning, Captain! Pleasant morning for lovers, isn't it?

ROBERT (*smiling*). Very pleasant, thank you.

GERALDINE (*to* KITTY). Kitty, we're going on deck till breakfast time. Call us when dad appears.

KITTY. Very well, ma'am.

(KITTY *begins setting table.*)

SIMMS. Just a moment, Kitty.

KITTY (*turning from table*). Yes, Mr. Si—— Oh, my! I beg your pardon.

SIMMS. That's all right; no harm done. I want to thank you for respecting my masquerade.

KITTY. Oh, you're very welcome, sir.

SIMMS (*to* ROBERT). And many thanks to you, also, Captain. I know you could put Mr. Ainsworth wise to a lot of things. It's mighty good of you to refrain.

ROBERT. I command my ship. What goes on in the cabin is no concern of mine.

GERALDINE (*heartily*). You're all right, Captain!

ROBERT (*bowing*). Thank you.

SIMMS (*to* KITTY). Kitty, please place these messages on the table where Mr. Ainsworth will see them. (*Hands* KITTY *the three slips of paper.*) Tell him they reached us during the night.

KITTY. Very well, sir.

(KITTY *turns and places messages on table.*)

GERALDINE. And don't forget to call us.

KITTY. No, miss.

(*Exeunt* GERALDINE *and* SIMMS, *stairway* R.)

ROBERT. You didn't give me your answer, Kitty.

KITTY (*ignoring his remark*). Aren't they a glorious couple?

ROBERT. Yes; but I know a couple that's just as glorious.

KITTY. Do you? I don't. Why, Miss Jerry is simply superb.

ROBERT. There are others.

KITTY. I know it. A sailor has "others" in every port, they say.

SIMMS. Kitty, that's unkind.

KITTY. Well, isn't it true?

ROBERT. You haven't answered my question.

KITTY (*innocently*). Did you ask me one?

ROBERT. Did I ask you one? Since the day we sailed I've asked you nothing else. I've told you that my love is wider than the ocean ——

KITTY. Ha, ha, ha! And just about as green.

ROBERT (*reproachfully*). Kitty!

KITTY. Don't bother me. I've got to set the table. Hand me one of those plates. (ROBERT *absently picks up a spoon from table and passes it to her.*) Ninny! I didn't ask for a spoon.

ROBERT. No; you're mightily afraid of "spoons," I notice.

KITTY. Any self-respecting girl ought to be, especially when a fickle-hearted sailor's around.

ROBERT. I'm not fickle. You're the only girl I ever cared a fig for.

KITTY. What a fib!

ROBERT. Think how happy we'd be sailing on the—er —sea of life. We both have perfect dispositions, and there'd never be a single storm for us to weather. We'd never quarrel ——

KITTY. That's so. I'm not a bit quarrelsome.

ROBERT. Neither am I.

KITTY. But you're awfully persistent.

ROBERT. No, I'm not.

KITTY. Yes, you are. You always have your own way.

ROBERT. Nonsense! I never do.

KITTY. Why, what a story!

ROBERT. Kitty, you know very well that ever since we left New York I've been a perfect slave to you.

KITTY (*gradually becoming angry*). I know nothing of the sort. You've been a perfect tyrant.

ROBERT. I haven't.

KITTY. Yes, you have.

ROBERT. Well, you're a flirt.

KITTY. So are you.

ROBERT (*furiously*). I've a mind ——

KITTY. Then it's a pretty empty one.

ROBERT. It isn't.

KITTY. It is.

ROBERT. Look here!

KITTY. Look yourself.

ROBERT. Why, Kitty!

KITTY (*stamping her foot*). I hate you.

ROBERT. No, you don't.

KITTY. Yes, I do.

ROBERT. You're going to marry me.

KITTY. I'd die first.

ROBERT. Then I'll jump overboard.

KITTY. Jump. I don't care.

ROBERT (*moving toward stairway*). I'm going.

KITTY (*coolly*). Good-bye.

ROBERT. I'll marry some other girl.

KITTY (*sharply*). You sha'n't.

ROBERT. I shall.

KITTY. I'll scratch her eyes out.

ROBERT. You can't.

KITTY. Well, I'll marry you myself—so there!

ROBERT. You—you'll—what! Oh, Kitty, do you mean it? I ——

KITTY. Oh, aren't we silly? I've been just horrid.

ROBERT. And I'm a brute. Let's make up.

KITTY. Yes, let's. (ROBERT *comes toward her.*) But not just now.

(*She tries to elude him, but he catches her and holds her in his arms.*)

ROBERT. Yes, now. Will you really marry me, Kitty?

KITTY. Well, I'll think about it. If Miss Jerry and Mr. Simms get married I'll have to be looking for another situation.

ROBERT (*releasing her*). Oh, they'll get married fast enough. They're plotting like regular thieves to win Mr. Ainsworth's consent.

KITTY. I know they are. Wasn't Mr. Ainsworth surprised to receive that first message? He actually thought it came from across the sea, and how he'll rave when he learns who his wireless operator really is!

ROBERT. I'm not so sure of that. He has taken quite a fancy to—Johnson.

KITTY. Perhaps that's part of Miss Jerry's game—to interest her father in Mr. Simms.

ROBERT. Oh, it's a deeper game than that. It has to do with the wireless and those messages there and the market. I can tell it isn't child's play by the way they manœuver.

KITTY. Well, we'll see the fun anyhow.

ROBERT. Yes; but I hope Mr. Ainsworth won't think I've had a hand in the deception.

KITTY. Of course he won't. Why, you knew nothing whatever about it.

ROBERT. No, I hadn't a suspicion till you told me that Mr. Simms was on the pier the morning we sailed and that he had studied wireless telegraphy. Then like a flash I knew what had happened. It was too late then, and so I kept quiet. (COUNT *is heard moaning in stateroom*, R. 2 E.) Listen! What's that?

KITTY. It sounds like Count di Lucca.

ROBERT. It is the Count.

(*Enter* COUNT, R. 2 E.)

COUNT (*moaning*). Oh, oh, oh!

ROBERT. Good-morning, sir.

COUNT. Oh, please, please, Captain, stoppa da yacht. I feela justa like I should die.

KITTY. Are you ill?

COUNT. Ill? No; I am sick—sick justa like a dog.

ROBERT. I'm sorry, but I'm afraid it won't do to stop the yacht.

COUNT. Oh, if you could justa keepa da boat still for only one littla minute I t'inka I should be vera much improve.

ROBERT. It's quite impossible. There's a heavy sea this morning.

COUNT. Yes, and da wave is big justa like-a da mountain.

ROBERT. Quite so.

COUNT. Oh, I shall not live to be buried in da mag-nif-i-cent tomb of my noble ancestors. I shall go down to da watery grave. I am humiliate. It is one greata disgrace.

ROBERT *(smiling)*. There's really no danger, I think. Your symptoms are not altogether unknown.

COUNT. You t'inka dat I will live?

ROBERT. Most assuredly. You'll feel better after breakfast.

COUNT. Breakfast! Oh, I could notta eat a t'ing. I have lose-a da wish for even da littla swallow.

(COUNT *sinks into chair*, L., *in an attitude of utter dejection. Enter* LADY CAROLINE, L. 2 E.)

LADY CAROLINE. Ah, how-d'you-do, everybody? Good-morning, Count.

COUNT *(rising)*. Gooda-morning, Lady Caroline. It is a delightful morning.

LADY CAROLINE. Perfectly ripping, isn't it?

COUNT *(sinking back into chair)*. Quite—ripping, t'anka you.

LADY CAROLINE. Eh? *(Regarding him closely.)* Why, my de-ar fellow, you're looking beastly. Aren't you well?

COUNT. T'anks. I'm miserable.

LADY CAROLINE. You look positively seedy, y'know. Let me ask the pater if he hasn't something that will brace you up a bit. *(Knocks on door,* R. 1 E.) Father!

AINSWORTH *(from stateroom)*. Hello! Breakfast ready? *(Enters,* R. 1 E.) Well, well! everybody waiting? I

guess I'm late. (*To* COUNT.) Great day, Count! I tell you this salt sea air puts new blood into a man's veins.

(*Exit* KITTY, *stairway* R.)

COUNT (*sarcastically*). Ah, yes; it is a great t'ing. I like it.

AINSWORTH. Hello! What's up?

COUNT. Everat'ing.

LADY CAROLINE. Count di Lucca is a bit under the weather this morning.

COUNT. My head spins around justa like-a da top.

AINSWORTH (*regarding him keenly*). Ha, ha, ha! Why, man, you're seasick.

COUNT. Ha, ha, ha! It is a gooda joke. I have aska da captain to stoppa da yacht, but he t'inka it is a joke also.

AINSWORTH. Stop the yacht? Well, that is a joke. Ha, ha, ha!

COUNT. Yes, it is vera funny.

LADY CAROLINE. Father, don't be unfeeling.

AINSWORTH. I'm not. I'm very sympathetic.

LADY CAROLINE. Can't you help the poor fellow?

AINSWORTH. Oh, he isn't going to die. Cheer up, Count. Your troubles won't last long.

COUNT. T'anka you. I am vera cheerful.

(COUNT *relaxes into attitude of dejection.*)

AINSWORTH. Ha, ha, ha! I see you are. (*Turning to* ROBERT.) Well, Captain, any news this morning?

ROBERT. Several wireless messages were received last night, sir.

AINSWORTH. Is that so? Where are they?

ROBERT. Johnson left them there on the table, sir.

AINSWORTH. Oh, yes; I remember. I told him to.

ROBERT. Shall I get them, sir?

AINSWORTH. No. I won't read 'em till Jerry comes. I'm teaching her how we manipulate the market. She's clever, too; wish she'd been a boy.

(*Enter* GERALDINE *and* SIMMS, *stairway* R.)

GERALDINE. Hard luck, isn't it, dad?

AINSWORTH. Well, I'm getting used to it. (*To* SIMMS.) 'Morning, Johnson!

SIMMS. Good-morning, sir.

AINSWORTH. Messages came last night, eh?

SIMMS. Yes. They're important, I think.

AINSWORTH. I want to know! Well, well, Jerry, we must have a look at 'em.

SIMMS (*taking messages from table*). They're here, sir. (*Hands one of the messages to* AINSWORTH.) This was the first to reach us.

AINSWORTH (*glancing at message*). H'm! Look here, Jerry. Your old dad knows a thing or two. (*Hands her the slip of paper.*) Read that.

GERALDINE (*reading with puzzled expression*). "Pagoda —remote." Well, I knew Rhoda had a pagoda, but I didn't know you were looking for one. What's it mean, dad, and why is it remote?

AINSWORTH (*laughing*). That's the cipher code. I forgot you didn't understand it. We have to keep our transactions secret, you know.

GERALDINE (*innocently*). Do you? How mysterious!

AINSWORTH. Well, it's practical. Translated, the message says that the petition for rehearing has been denied.

GERALDINE (*clapping her hands*). How perfectly delightful! Just what you predicted, isn't it?

AINSWORTH (*with beaming face*). Sure thing!

GERALDINE. Oh, you're a wizard, dad!

AINSWORTH. Well, I guess I've cut my wisdom teeth. Now, Jerry, watch how we play the game.

GERALDINE. I'm watching.

AINSWORTH (*to* SIMMS). Where's the next one, Johnson?

SIMMS (*handing him a second slip of paper*). This is it, sir.

AINSWORTH (*inspecting the message with a puzzled frown*). H'm! Eh? (*Puts on eye-glasses.*) What's this? (*Takes small note-book from pocket and compares it with message.*) You've made a mistake, man. That can't be right.

SIMMS. I think it is, sir.

AINSWORTH. I tell you it's impossible. Why, what—what ails the idiots? Can't get control? Stuff! Of course they can.

GERALDINE (*sweetly*). Something wrong, dad?

AINSWORTH (*gruffly*). Yes—no. I don't know.

SIMMS. Better read the last message, sir. It explains the situation, I think.

(SIMMS *hands* AINSWORTH *the remaining message.*)

AINSWORTH. Yes, yes, of course. (*Scrutinizes message.*) What! By heaven, it's a lie!

GERALDINE. My, dad, how melodramatic!

AINSWORTH (*sternly*). Jerry, is this another practical joke?

GERALDINE. I'm sure I don't know. Is the pagoda less remote, dad? What does the message say?

AINSWORTH. It says that the majority stock of the Universal Electric Company has been purchased by one John Simms. Do you hear me? By one John Simms.

GERALDINE. Yes, dad, I hear.

AINSWORTH. Egad! is that name to pursue me everywhere?

GERALDINE. It's a nice name, dad; better get used to it. I may take a notion to wear it one of these days.

AINSWORTH. There'll be precious little left to wear when I get through with the fellow.

GERALDINE. Dear me, dad, how dreadfully volcanic! Don't rave. Jack will sell you his stock. I'll ask him to—for a consideration.

AINSWORTH. Oh-ho, young lady! So you've had a hand in this business, eh?

GERALDINE. How did you guess it, dad?

AINSWORTH. I'm not an imbecile.

GERALDINE. I never thought you were.

AINSWORTH (*to* SIMMS). Johnson, has my daughter communicated by wireless with this man Simms?

SIMMS (*hesitatingly*). Why, sir, I——

AINSWORTH (*sternly*). Answer me.

GERALDINE. Don't hesitate, Mr. Johnson. Tell dad the truth.

SIMMS. During the past two days, sir, they have communicated with each other almost constantly.

AINSWORTH. Concerning the market, I presume?

SIMMS. For the most part, yes.

AINSWORTH. And why did you not report this to me?

SIMMS. I'm not employed to act the spy.

AINSWORTH. H'm! Mighty finical, aren't you?

GERALDINE (*archly*). Remember it's the same old story, dad. The strongest survives.

AINSWORTH (*grimly*). Oh, I guess I'm a match for a

beggarly schoolmaster. Why, the fellow hasn't a nickel to his name.

GERALDINE. But I have, dad.

AINSWORTH. Yes; and I suppose you've loaned him your entire fortune to invest in this wildcat scheme.

GERALDINE (*quietly*). Jack knows that he's welcome to all I have.

AINSWORTH. He's welcome to all he gets. Once let me reach dry land ——

COUNT (*rising with animation*). Letta me go, too.

AINSWORTH (*savagely*). Hold your tongue! (COUNT *sinks back into his former attitude.*) Once let me reach New York, I say, and I'll break this precious lover of yours like a reed.

(KITTY *has entered stairway* L., *quietly, during* GERALDINE'S *last speech. Having placed fruit on the table, she now comes forward and addresses* AINSWORTH.)

KITTY. Breakfast is served, sir.

AINSWORTH (*fiercely*). Breakfast be hanged! (KITTY *returns hastily to table.*) Captain, turn the yacht about. I'm going home.

LADY CAROLINE (*with horror*). Not back to America, father?

AINSWORTH. Yes, to America.

COUNT. But how do I reacha da sunny Italy?

AINSWORTH (*sharply*). Walk.

LADY CAROLINE. Father, you're positively brutal.

AINSWORTH. I am, eh? Well, don't let it trouble you. If you don't like my conversation, go talk to your sweet little Count.

LADY CAROLINE. Hush! What will he think of you?

AINSWORTH. I don't know and I don't care.

LADY CAROLINE. Father, listen to me.

AINSWORTH. Oh, I've listened to you quite long enough. And while I've been trying to swallow your high-flown notions about earls and dukes and European culture, a good, live American has held me up for a cool million or so.

GERALDINE (*quickly*). Oh! Then you admit that he has held you up.

AINSWORTH. For the moment, yes. He'll sing a different tune, though, when I get back home again.

GERALDINE. Oh, he's quite able to fight his own battles.

AINSWORTH. Well, he'll have plenty of battles to fight. (*Turns to* ROBERT.) Captain, don't stand there like a blockhead. Turn the boat around, I say.

ROBERT. Do you really mean it, sir?

AINSWORTH. Mean it? Of course I do. I sha'n't have a minute's peace of mind till I've met this smart young school-teacher face to face.

ROBERT. But, sir ——

AINSWORTH (*imperiously*). Not another word! Obey my orders.

SIMMS (*quietly*). Mr. Ainsworth, those orders are quite unnecessary.

AINSWORTH. Well, upon my word!

SIMMS. Your business with Mr. Simms can be transacted here and now.

AINSWORTH. By wireless—yes. But I'm done with toys.

SIMMS. I'm not referring to the wireless, sir.

AINSWORTH. You're not? Then what the deuce do you mean?

SIMMS. I mean that the man you're so anxious to meet isn't in New York, nor even in America.

AINSWORTH (*contemptuously*). Stuff! What's your reason for thinking so?

SIMMS (*calmly*). The very best reason in the world. I am John Simms.

AINSWORTH (*with astonishment*). You—John Simms!

SIMMS. Precisely.

AINSWORTH. So? You've bribed your way into my employ, eh?—taken and received confidential messages, and ——

GERALDINE. One moment, dad! There's been no trickery here, except perhaps in Jack's securing employment in place of your wireless man. We thought you had sense of humor enough to take that joke like a sportsman. As for the purchase of the stock, I alone am responsible, and my brokers will tell you that they had my order before we left New York. What you told me the other day only confirmed my suspicions. Thus far, I'm proud to say we've been able to conduct our campaign without adopting your—well, your tactics.

AINSWORTH (*sarcastically*). Indeed! I congratulate you.

GERALDINE. We've captured your intrenchments in fair, open battle, dad. The wireless has been your weapon as much as mine, and I have never asked Jack to use it to your detriment.

AINSWORTH. Very considerate, I'm sure.

GERALDINE. But it's brought us the good news we desired, and armed with that information I reckon we're invincible. With this brief explanation I retire to the ranks. You may surrender the fort to Jack.

AINSWORTH (*choking with rage*). Surrender? Why, I— I—— Oh, I haven't begun to fight!

GERALDINE. Tut, tut, dad! Do be original. (*To the others.*) Ladies and gentlemen, the ceremonies of capitulation will be duly observed in the saloon of the "Mistress Mary" at an early date. The victors are already waiting to receive the spoils. For further particulars consult the defeated army.

(KITTY *stands near table with* LADY CAROLINE *on her left.* AINSWORTH *is* C. GERALDINE *is on his right, and* SIMMS, *on his left.* ROBERT *stands near stairway, and* COUNT *is seated in chair at extreme* L.)

CURTAIN

ACT III

THE CAPITULATION

SCENE.—*Same as Act II, except that dishes and table-cloth have been removed from table.*

(*At rise of curtain,* LADY CAROLINE *and* COUNT *are discovered seated* R. C. *and* L. C., *respectively.*)

LADY CAROLINE. My de-ar Count, I fe-ar your suit is hopeless.

COUNT. Lady Caroline, da fates are against me. Yesterday I was so sick dat I could notta hold up my head, and now dat I am myself again, you tella me dat your beautiful sister will notta marry me.

LADY CAROLINE. To tell the truth, Jerry has never looked upon the alliance with favor, but I counted on father's influence to overcome her opposition.

COUNT. And your father? Does he now deserta me?

LADY CAROLINE. Is it possible you didn't appreciate the situation yesterday?

COUNT. There was vera mucha yesterday dat I did notta appreciate.

LADY CAROLINE. I can well understand it. 'Twas a beastly day.

COUNT. T'anka you. I t'inka so myself.

LADY CAROLINE. Well, Jerry and this young American deliberately set a trap for the pater. It was a vul-gar, low-bred trick, and I fancy father is at their mercy. In fact, he has intimated as much to me. Worst of all, he's half inclined to admire what he calls the "cool nerve" of the thing. They're to have an interview this morning.

COUNT. Is it so? Then I must speaka to Miss Jerry. I t'inka dat I have delay too long already. I musta be resolute. It is da quality dat catcha da fancy of American girls.

LADY CAROLINE. Oh, Jerry's fancy is already caught. Her views are distorted, and she doesn't value rank and

nobility as you and I value them. Your efforts w ll be doomed to failure, I fe-ar.

COUNT. Never-da-less, I will make-a da formal offer of marriage to her in the American style. Perhaps it is whata she expects. (GERALDINE *is heard whistling off* R.) Ah! it is she already.

LADY CAROLINE (*with disgust*). Heavens! Whistling, too, in her vul-gar, tomboy fashion. Well, Count, I'll leave you to your fate; but mind, I prophesy failure.

COUNT. Ah, no; I shalla succeed!

(*Enter* GERALDINE, *stairway* R.)

GERALDINE (*sweetly*). Do I intrude?

LADY CAROLINE. Not at all. I'm going on deck. Count, you may join me later if you choose.

COUNT (*bowing impressively*). T'anka you. I will availa myself of da privilege. (*Exit* LADY CAROLINE, *stairway* L.) Miss Ainsworth, I t'inka dat you are a bird, your whistle is so sweet.

GERALDINE. Ha, ha, ha! So I'm a bird, eh? Thanks awfully. It takes an American to appreciate that compliment. What sort of bird do I resemble, pray?

COUNT (*bowing low*). Da bird of paradise!

GERALDINE (*laughing*). I guess the saucy little wren is more in my line.

COUNT. Miss Ainsworth—Miss Jerry, I have-a some-t'ing serious to tella you.

GERALDINE. Serious? What is it, Count?

COUNT (*proudly*). I am da last of a great and noble race.

GERALDINE. My! that is a pretty serious proposition.

COUNT. My ancestors have helpa to make-a da history of Italy. In all da world there is no name more glorious than mine. I owna da grand ancestral palace. It is beautiful; it is sublime. But, alas! da walls, they crumble and fall. I have notta da wealth to supportta such mag-nif-i-cence. You, signorina, are vera rich, but you are American; you have no such a t'ing as da noble ancestor. Behold! I will give-a to you da proud name Di Lucca, and you shall give-a to me da cash. (*Grandly.*) Miss Ainsworth—Miss Jerry—signorina, I offer to you my hand.

GERALDINE. Ha, ha, ha! How refreshingly frank!

COUNT (*haughtily*). Ah! You give-a to me da "ha-ha"! I am insult'.

GERALDINE. I sincerely beg your pardon. Believe me, Count di Lucca, I am not insensible to the honor you have done me. It is only that our views of life are different. You prize great riches and a regal name. To me they are as nothing compared with love.

COUNT. Ah, but I have-a da grand passion. I ——

GERALDINE. It isn't the grand passion I'm talking about. I'm speaking of the simplest and divinest thing in the universe. We can't explain it any more than we can tell why the voice of the wireless speaks through immeasurable distance. Perhaps, if we but knew, it is the selfsame power at work with human souls. The clink of gold or the "tinkling cymbal" of pride has deafened some of us for a while, but I—thank God!—can still hear above it all love's exquisite melody. (*Enter* SIMMS, *stairway* R. AINSWORTH *enters from the same direction immediately afterward, and stands on landing at back.* SIMMS *moves toward* GERALDINE.) Count di Lucca, the man I love has neither earthly wealth nor pride of ancestry, but I love him because he is strong and true and genuine. (*Turns toward* SIMMS.) I love him more than name or fame or fortune, and I scorn your impious bargain.

(GERALDINE *gives her left hand to* SIMMS, *and they stand half facing* COUNT. GERALDINE *is at* R. C., *the* COUNT, L. C., *and* SIMMS, C., *though not quite so far front as either* GERALDINE *or* COUNT. AINSWORTH *comes forward, and as he speaks,* SIMMS *crosses to* R. AINSWORTH *moves to* C.)

AINSWORTH. H'm! Pretty touching sentiment! Count, I guess that's what they call a "grand slam."

GERALDINE (*innocently*). Talking Esperanto, dad?

AINSWORTH. Not exactly. My dear Count, don't let my daughter's conduct annoy you! She's a bit wilful just now, but she'll grow more tractable in the next few minutes.

COUNT. Ah! Then I will waita her pleasure on da deck. Ecco! I go.

(*Exit,* L.)

AINSWORTH. Good-day. (*Turns to* GERALDINE *and*

SIMMS.) Well, my fine young financiers, I'm ready to talk business. It won't take more than a minute or two to acquaint you with my decision.

GERALDINE. The reins are in Jack's hands, dad. Leave me out of the controversy.

AINSWORTH. Oh, I guess we're not going to have any controversy.

GERALDINE (*sweetly*). That's nice, I'm sure.

AINSWORTH. Just at first I was angry to think you'd tried to play a trick on me.

GERALDINE (*quizzically*). Tried, dad?

AINSWORTH. It amounts to that. (*Addresses* SIMMS, GERALDINE *moving to back of stage.*) I've been thinking the matter over since yesterday. I've had a good night's sleep, and have reached a conclusion.

SIMMS. I'm glad to hear it, sir.

AINSWORTH. Maybe you won't be so glad when you do hear it—sir.

SIMMS. Indeed! May I ask what your decision is?

AINSWORTH. You may. To be honest with you, I've decided that the game isn't worth the candle.

SIMMS. What am I to understand by that?

AINSWORTH. You're to understand that, so far as I'm concerned, Universal Electric is a dead duck.

SIMMS. A dead duck?

AINSWORTH. Oh, I don't say it couldn't be resuscitated —in time. I thought till yesterday I'd undertake the task, but in view of the court's decision and the fact that you and my daughter have shown such unusual interest in the stock, I've concluded to adopt a very simple course.

GERALDINE (*as though reciting to herself*).

I know a magnate fair of speech,
Take care!
He can both cheat and overreach,
Beware! Beware!

AINSWORTH (*fretfully*). Jerry, what sort of drivel are you spouting?

GERALDINE. I'm revising Longfellow a bit.

AINSWORTH. H'm!

SIMMS (*politely*). You were saying, sir?

AINSWORTH. I was saying that I shouldn't care to con-

sider any proposition you might wish to make me relative to the majority stock of the Universal Electric Company for the simple reason that I've decided to let it alone.

SIMMS. You mean ——?

AINSWORTH. Just what I say. I'm sorry my daughter has squandered her fortune, but we all have to buy a few gold bricks in the course of human progress, and perhaps the lesson is worth it.

GERALDINE. Ahem! William Ainsworth, philosopher!

AINSWORTH. There's another matter, too, that I wish to mention. They tell me you want to marry my daughter. Mr. Simms, forget it. I have other plans for her future.

GERALDINE (*coming forward*). Do you know, dad, I have a tremendous admiration for you?

AINSWORTH. Have you? Why?

GERALDINE. Because you're such a gigantic bluffer.

AINSWORTH (*irritably*). I thought you withdrew from this controversy.

GERALDINE (*affably*). I thought it wasn't a controversy.

(GERALDINE *retires to back of stage.*)

SIMMS. Mr. Ainsworth, I'm exceedingly glad you have been so frank with me. I'll try to be equally frank with you. Had you desired to purchase a controlling interest in the Universal Electric Company, I should have felt compelled, under the existing circumstances, to sell you, for a fair remuneration, stock which I vastly prefer to keep.

AINSWORTH. Well, I like your nerve!

SIMMS. I have no doubt in my own mind that this investment will more than treble in value. Furthermore, I propose to elect myself general manager of the corporation at a munificent salary. You see I have at least an elementary knowledge of how you magnates play the game.

(GERALDINE *applauds softly.*)

AINSWORTH (*grimly*). I see.

SIMMS. That brings us to your second proposition, concerning which I beg to inform you that I shall certainly marry your daughter in spite of your flippant request for me to "forget it." 'Tis true that both Jerry and I prefer your consent, but we don't consider it indispensable, nor worth more than a reasonable concession.

AINSWORTH. You don't, eh? Well, what do you call a reasonable concession?

SIMMS. It is futile for us to quibble. You don't care to purchase, and I'm not anxious to sell. Why, then, should we prolong this interview?

AINSWORTH. Why, indeed?

SIMMS. In the main we agree most admirably. Permit me, therefore, to bid you good-morning.

(SIMMS *starts toward stairway, but turns as* AINSWORTH *speaks.*)

AINSWORTH. Just one moment, if you please. You say you'd feel compelled to sell me your stock at a fair price in case I desired to buy. Assuming for the moment that I do so desire, what is your price?

SIMMS. Mr. Ainsworth, suppose we drop assumptions. Do you wish to purchase this stock, or don't you?

AINSWORTH. Why, no; I hardly think ——

SIMMS (*moving to doorway*). Good-morning.

AINSWORTH (*hastily*). Wait, wait, Mr. Simms. Don't be so hasty. (SIMMS *turns.*) Of course, if I can buy it right ——

SIMMS (*coming forward*). You can, sir. I have no disposition to take an unfair advantage.

AINSWORTH. Very well, then. What is your proposition?

SIMMS. My proposition is this. I will transfer to you the majority stock of the Universal Electric Company for three times what it cost, in cash—and your daughter's hand in marriage.

AINSWORTH (*laughing boisterously but affectedly*). Ha, ha, ha! Why, man, your price is fabulous. Besides, I'm not selling my daughter.

GERALDINE (*coming down stage*). Aren't you, dad? I thought you'd begun negotiations with Count di Lucca.

AINSWORTH (*angrily*). Jerry, will you be quiet?

GERALDINE (*smiling*). Don't get ruffled, dad.

AINSWORTH. Ruffled? You'd try the patience of Job. (*Addressing* SIMMS.) Now, Mr. Simms, this proposition of yours is ridiculous. I couldn't afford to pay half what you ask, and as for Jerry ——

GERALDINE. I'll take care of myself, thank you. All we want is your—er—blessing.

AINSWORTH. H'm! Looks to me as though this lover of yours wanted a penny or two besides.

SIMMS. Mr. Ainsworth, let us cease this game of cross-purposes. Jerry and I understand each other perfectly. We've weighed the pros and cons; we've decided just how important your consent is to us, and just what we're willing to pay for it. You know, and so do I, that the stock I hold is worth at least five times what Jerry bought it for, and you're the only man on top of this round globe who could purchase it at any price. You've heard my proposition, sir. You can take it or leave it.

AINSWORTH. By the eternal Jupiter! I——

SIMMS (*quietly*). Raging and blustering won't help matters.

AINSWORTH. Well, I'll be——!

GERALDINE. Tut, tut, dad! You're in the presence of a lady.

AINSWORTH. Well, I'd never suspect it. Why, of all the highway robberies!

GERALDINE (*imitating* AINSWORTH'S *manner in Act I*). H'm! "Nobody knows just how valuable the stock is except myself. Yes—I guess I'd pay a pretty good price for it if I had to."

AINSWORTH. Great heavens! That a daughter of mine should deliberately betray my confidence!

GERALDINE. Remember, dad, that you and I wouldn't be here if the monkeys had observed a code of ethics.

AINSWORTH. Ethics! O slush! (*To* SIMMS.) Well, Mr. Simms, I'll be generous. I'll give you twice——

SIMMS. My dear sir, do I look like a man who says one thing and means another? I've already told you that my only reason for making you an offer at all is because I want your consent to my marriage with Jerry. I'm going to marry her anyway, but I'm willing to lose a few thousand dollars for the sake of gratifying a sentiment.

AINSWORTH. So this is sentiment, eh?

SIMMS. No, it's business, and I don't propose to haggle any longer. If you want the stock on the terms I have mentioned, say so.

AINSWORTH (*snappishly*). Well, I don't.

SIMMS (*decisively*). Very well. We'll call negotiations ended. (*Starts again toward doorway.*)

AINSWORTH (*shouting*). Here, here! Come back!

(SIMMS *returns.*) Jerry, just as soon as we reach dry land, find a parson and marry this fellow.

GERALDINE (*with excitement*). Dad, dad! Do you really mean it?

AINSWORTH. I certainly do. Shylock was satisfied with a pound of flesh. This chap wants a full-grown woman—and a fortune. Don't let him escape. I need him in my business.

(*Enter* LADY CAROLINE *and* COUNT, *stairway* L. *Their entrance is unnoticed by* GERALDINE *and* AINSWORTH.)

GERALDINE (*affectionately*). Dear, dear dad! But what about Count di Lucca?

AINSWORTH. Oh, the Count will find solace in his noble ancestry.

COUNT. Ah, do you hear that, Lady Caroline?

LADY CAROLINE (*coming forward*). Indeed I do. Father, what does this mean?

GERALDINE. Cheer up, Carrie! It means that dad has at last consented.

LADY CAROLINE (*haughtily*). Consented to what, pray?

GERALDINE. To my marriage with Jack.

LADY CAROLINE (*as though shocked*). Heavens! How plebeian! Count, I apologize for my family. They're hopelessly American, I fe-ar.

KITTY (*outside*). No, I shall always call you "Captain." (*Enters, stairway* R., *and pauses on landing, looking up stairway.*) I couldn't say "Robert," or—"Bobby," or—"Bob."

ROBERT (*outside*). Ah, but you have said it.

KITTY. I haven't.

ROBERT (*entering, stairway* R.). You have.

KITTY (*turning toward front*). I—— (*Sees the others.*) Oh, I beg your pardon! (*Comes forward.*)

GERALDINE. It's all right, Kitty. You're just in time to congratulate us. Dad has relented, and Jack and I are going to be married.

ROBERT (*coming forward*). So are we; aren't we, Kitty?

KITTY. Oh, Miss Jerry, I'm so glad! How did it happen?

GERALDINE. Well, it didn't exactly happen—of itself, I mean. (*Glances at* AINSWORTH, *mischievously.*) The fit-

test doesn't survive, you know, without a struggle. (*Gleefully.*) Tell them about it, dad.

AINSWORTH. Well, you see, I thought my brokers couldn't get along in my absence without an occasional word of advice, so I had the yacht equipped with this Marconi abomination, and, egad! it's been my undoing; for of all the gossiping, meddlesome contrivances ——!

GERALDINE. Oh, dad, what sacrilege! It's the grandest, most wonderful invention in the world—isn't it, Jack?

SIMMS (*smiling*). You could hardly expect me to think otherwise.

AINSWORTH. H'm! You're prejudiced.

SIMMS. Perhaps I am. At any rate, I shall never forget that the girl I love was won by wireless.

(GERALDINE *is* C., *with* SIMMS *on her right, and* AINSWORTH *on her left.* LADY CAROLINE *and* COUNT *are at extreme* R., *but further up stage.* KITTY *and* ROBERT *occupy similar positions at extreme* L.)

CURTAIN

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